

**TESTIMONY OF
CONNECTICUT HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION
SUBMITTED TO THE
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
Wednesday, January 31, 2007**

HB 6839, An Act Concerning Health Information Technology

The Connecticut Hospital Association (CHA) supports the concepts contained in **HB 6839, An Act Concerning Health Information Technology**, which are designed to position Connecticut to be a leader in health information technology. Connecticut's hospitals fully support appropriate, planned technology growth that will allow all of Connecticut's healthcare providers and partners to be leaders in information technology. At the same time, it is critical that Connecticut not advance information technology systems or solutions that are not fully compatible and consistent with the numerous industry and national initiatives in process and standards currently being developed.

The complexities of health information technologies have occupied health planning experts for several years, and the pace of the developing national health information infrastructure and interoperability standards and has been frustrating to hospitals and other healthcare providers. Additionally, the enormous and escalating costs involved in migrating from a paper-based format to a fully electronic platform have dictated slow and deliberate advancements. It is essential that hospitals and other care providers be able to rely on the specifications and recommendations of national experts, regulators and vendors, and not be subject to constantly shifting conditions and requirements that have already made the investment in health information technology difficult and expensive.

CHA supports the formation of an advisory committee established in Section 3 of the bill. This type of process is essential for moving forward with planned advancement in health information technology. We urge you to include the appropriate stakeholders as appointed members of any such committee. The input of Connecticut's healthcare provider community will be necessary if viable solutions are to be achieved. Connecticut's hospitals have amassed significant expertise in the field of health information technology. CHA's President and CEO, Jennifer Jackson, is a member of the America Hospital Association's Information Technology Advisory Group, which works collaboratively with numerous stakeholders on a national level to ensure that health information technology is one of the highest priorities for improving the delivery of healthcare and managing healthcare costs.

Section 5 of the bill is specific to data reporting for the Medicaid program. Connecticut hospitals have a proud tradition of publicly disclosing information regarding cost, quality, and efficiency. CHA would welcome the opportunity to share what Connecticut hospitals currently do in this regard with the Commissioner of Social Services. Given the enormous burden that the current level of under-funding places on hospitals, it would be important that any new requirement

satisfy two tests. First, the reporting requirements should be compatible with the current requirements of Joint Commission and CMS. Second, it should provide opportunities to increase funding to hospitals; reductions in any form would further undermine an already underfunded system. We welcome the opportunity to work with the committee and DSS on this issue.

There are several proposals on how Connecticut should advance health information technology, including Bill No. 88, which seeks to mandate electronic health records without first giving careful consideration to financial, technical and regulatory implications. Connecticut, in pushing for leadership in health information technology, must strike a balance between the universally agreed goal of arriving at a truly interoperable platform as soon as reasonably practical, while recognizing that to achieve these goals there are limitations on the available technical and regulatory solutions that must be carefully navigated.

Thank you for your consideration of our position.

For additional information, contact CHA Government Relations at (203) 269-7310.